Sustainable Transportation Plan Advisory Committee

Date: Friday, November 6, 2020
Time: 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM
Location: Conducted via Remote Participation

In attendance: Mike Rademacher, Heather Barber, Darcy Devney, Daniel Amstutz, Julie Wayman, Doug Mayo-Wells, Len Diggins, Rachael Stark, Phil Goff, Kristine Shah, Jenny Raitt, Ali Carter, Matt Smith, Alyson Fletcher.

Minutes

1. Welcome and Introduction to Remote Meeting, including Ground Rules.

   Daniel Amstutz read a set of prepared remarks explaining the procedures that the Committee would follow to hold a virtual meeting. Governor Baker signed an Executive Order in response to the COVID-19 pandemic allowing virtual meetings, which suspended the usual Open Meeting Law requirement that a quorum of committee members be physically present in order to hold an official committee meeting. Amstutz confirmed the committee members in attendance for the meeting.

2. Approval of Minutes from July 13 and July 28, 2020.

   With the committee's consent, Amstutz advanced this item on the agenda (Approval of Minutes) because Matt Smith had not arrived at the meeting yet. Minutes from July 13 and 28 were approved.

3. Connect Arlington Next Steps.

   Alyson Fletcher of Nelson/Nygaard discussed the second survey for Connect Arlington that would help identify more specific transportation priorities for the strategies and recommendations of the plan. They are developing an online survey that may be through Surveymonkey or through an online storymap. Fletcher presented a draft framework for the survey for discussion. They are converting the top goals from the first survey into goal and vision statements for the plan. The first question on the survey is meant to get information on specific plan priorities that should be improved on first. [Matt Smith arrived at the meeting at this point.] Phil Goff asked if the choices under the first question are meant to mirror the goals statements. Smith said they do align with the goals, but are

framed differently to help understand rankings of priorities.

Smith discussed the next section of the survey, which asks about priorities within each travel mode. Examples include transit priorities, road allocation priorities, and sustainability. The rankings of the priorities doesn't necessarily mean that that is how they will end up in the recommendations of the plan, but it can help inform where more education of the public may be needed, among other things. Rachael Stark recommended including a COVID-19-related question for roadway allocation about space to walk in the street to social distance. Smith agreed this is a good idea. Smith provided additional examples about curbside use and pedestrian safety as additional topic areas. For some topic areas, such as transit, there is a difference between what the town can do and what needs to be advocated with outside entities, in this case the MBTA. However there are regional partnerships that also can be pursued such as with Lexington and expanding the Lexpress. Stark noted that maintenance and clearing of snow from sidewalks should be included under accessibility. Kristine Shah agreed that this is something she heard frequently during the outreach on the first survey. Doug Mayo-Wells asked for clarity on whether all questions were ranked-choice questions or some only allowed for one answer. Smith explained that they did not clarify that at this stage in this draft form. Goff commented that the draft is too wordy with too much jargon for a public survey. Smith agreed with his points and noted they have been considering a story map format, which partly explains the wordiness because the point would be to tell a story with a survey integrated.

Fletcher went over examples of online story maps. They incorporate text, maps, pictures, and survey data collection to provide greater context for survey questions. They have been very successful in collecting feedback on a variety of projects nationally. Smith explained they were trying to determine how this would work within this survey for Connect Arlington.

Heather Barber commented that ranked-choice options may be preferable so people are not caught in either-or propositions. Smith said this is a good point and they may be able to include more options that way. Len Diggins said providing more information is important for educating the public, but perhaps there could be a "pop-out" for those that want to read more. He added that the survey needs to include more about pedestrian improvements and maintenance of sidewalks, and commented on some wording in the draft. Darcy Devney noted the survey language is important and asked for time to get comments from the Disability Commission. She also said it's critical to call out tree preservation given its importance to many residents. Mike Rademacher added that conflicts with trees during sidewalk projects come up all the time and no perfect solution exists. Smith said if comments come from the Disability Commission they should be provided in the next few days so they can release the survey soon. He also agreed that sidewalk maintenance and tree issues are tricky but the idea is to have options and explore different ways of dealing with problems when they come up. Using tactical and temporary projects can also be ways to test out

different strategies and solutions. Fletcher said they can revise the survey to try and address this. Devney further noted that the item about electric vehicle charging should note that these spaces are usually reserved for only EVs.

In response to a question, Smith went over maps they had made showing the locations of areas of concern in the Transportation Feedback Map and showing the locations of crashes in Arlington. He pointed out that resident concerns and the locations of the most severe crashes tend to align around the commercial areas of Arlington Heights, Arlington Center, and East Arlington. Fletcher noted they had done some processing of the areas of concern for the Public Engagement Summary as well.

The committee also discussed parking spaces removed for outdoor dining and additional sidewalk dining implemented as part of the Town's COVID-19 response. There was discussion about the tradeoffs of eliminating parking for this purpose while also supporting businesses.

Smith presented examples from other cities and towns to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety, as well as highlights of successful projects that Arlington has already done, as part of the discussion. The committee discussed the importance of messaging transportation projects and why certain decisions are being made. Financial constraints of different recommendations were also brought up. Smith pointed out that transparency in decision-making would help people understand financial constraints and rationale for Town transportation decisions.

Diggins recommended that a reference to equity be included in the survey. Goff noted that for crossing improvements, there should be pictures or examples of pedestrian signals.

Fletcher said that any further comments on the survey should be sent to her and Smith by next Monday at noon. Smith noted that the survey will be up for a few weeks and the next public meeting about Connect Arlington is expected to take place in early December. Devney pointed out that Town Meeting members will be busy in the upcoming weeks with Special Town Meeting, so it may be hard to get their attention. Smith said the survey could be kept open an extra week to accommodate additional time for responses.

Smith thanked the committee members for their comments and participation on the plan development.

4. Automatic pedestrian walking signals (Automatic Recall).

Goff asked if this issue could be rolled into the pedestrian mode section of the survey. Smith said he will look at the survey and try to find a way to include it. Amstutz noted that the Town Manager had recommended that this committee review the issue, and at a future meeting he hopes to be able to discuss it more

fully.

5. Adjourn.

   Amstutz said the next meeting is expected to be in December and the discussion will be around the final recommendations of the plan.